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dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services

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Case files to be investigated

With the help of new staff, every social assistance case in Ontario will be re-examined as part of continuing efforts to prevent abuse of the welfare system, Minister Tony Silipo has announced.

The ministry will bring in 270 specially-trained staff to conduct its investigations. The new positions will initially be filled through matching qualified surplused ministry and OPS employees to the job requirements. The announcement was made Mar. 28.

The new area-office investigators will look at every file to make sure all required information, such as income and expenses, is available and correct. Clients will be required to provide proof where needed and if they cannot, benefits will be reduced or eliminated.

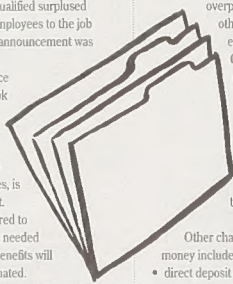
"We are not going to cut holes in the social safety net — we are making it more effective," said the minister.

The minister noted that the number of people who live on social assistance has doubled in four years — from 660,000 people in March 1990 to 1.3 million now.

The ministry also plans to recover overpayments made to social assistance recipients which now total about \$335 million.

The Mar. 28 announcement is part of ongoing efforts to improve management of the social assistance system. Since 1992-93, 450 provincial staff have been added to reduce fraudulent claims, recover

overpayments, help clients find other sources of income and encourage job training. Overpayment and recovery units have been established in all 13 area offices to recover funds to which former clients were not entitled; \$328 million will be saved in the 1993-94 fiscal year as a result of these and other measures.



Other changes that will help save money include:

- direct deposit of Family Benefits by 60 per cent of recipients to eliminate the cost of replacing lost or stolen cheques (the goal is 90 per cent);
- putting case files on a new computer network in 1995 to better handle caseloads.

...greenest

Maximum Green is under way in the Ontario Public Service, and on Mar. 28 the Hepburn Block became the 10th government building to join the Maximum Green campaign.

Everyone in a Maximum Green building recycles everything that can be recycled in an effort to dramatically reduce the amount of waste that has to go to landfill. Right now the Macdonald-Carter Building in Kingston is the top recycling building on the OPS — it reduced its waste by 70 per cent. Eleven more Ontario government buildings will become Maximum Green later this year. In



the photo, Minister of Community and Social Services Tony Silipo and Minister of Health Ruth Grier finish snipping the ribbon on a recycling centre in the Hepburn Block (both Health and MCSS occupy the Hepburn Block).

Julie Nazarey photo

ESR Straight Talk: a progress report

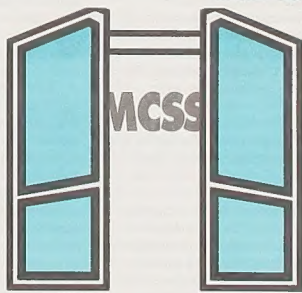
By the ESR Task Force Communications Working Group

As you already know, the Employment Systems Review (ESR) is a component of employment equity in the Ontario government. This comprehensive review will attempt to identify employment barriers in MCSS faced by designated group members, and make recommendations to eliminate these barriers. The ESR Task Force, a joint partnership of MCSS management and bargaining unit staff, with the support of technical and resource specialists, have been hard at work since their initial training in July 1993.

The ESR has three main components leading up to the development of recommendations and strategies. First was the analysis of MCSS workforce data, which has been completed. Second is a document review where the focus is on MCSS formal employment-related documents, policies and procedures which support the ministry's employment systems. Third is a study of informal systems such as: culture, attitudes, values, group norms and feelings which

constitute informal environment. The ESR Task Force has finished its workforce analysis showing how designated group members are represented in the ministry by region and occupation. The analysis also compared designated group members to non-designated group members in terms of six measures. These measures are: representation; occupational distribution; occupational segregation; access to power and decision-making; job security;

continued on page 2



EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS REVIEW

Northwestern Regional Centre places last resident

The last resident of Northwestern Regional Centre in Thunder Bay was placed into the community on Mar. 29. Redeployment activities continue for the few remaining staff who were providing care and support to the clients. Most staff have been redeployed elsewhere in the Ontario Public Service. Northwestern Regional Centre, with the

placement of all clients and closure of the physical site, is the second Schedule 1 facility closed as part of the ministry's Multi-Year Plan. Muskoka Centre in Gravenhurst closed earlier in 1993. Paul Christensen, NRC's former administrator, is now at Southwestern Regional Centre.

Awarding the Amethyst

It's time once again to think about the outstanding achievements among your colleagues and to do something about it.

The second annual Amethyst Awards, given for outstanding achievement by Ontario public servants, are open for 1994. You can nominate a colleague or group of colleagues for achievement in the fields of client service,

innovation, valuing people or professional achievement.

Nominations close June 1. At last October's awards ceremony (held in conjunction with Customer Service Week), MCSS staff garnered the most awards of any single ministry. For more information and nomination forms, contact Ontario Honours and Awards at 416-314-7526.



DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES BRANCH

7th floor, Hepburn Block, Room 750
Reception: (416) 325-5440 Fax: (416) 325-5500

MCSS
Restructuring

- part of Program Management Division
- supports policy creation and implementation planning in the area of services for people with developmental disabilities
- supports strategic decision-making related to effective program management
- supports program delivery system through the area offices
- liaises with other branches/divisions/ministries/community services to support provision of generic services to persons with developmental disabilities
- manages Developmental Services Communication Network
- provides direct provincial services through Schedule 1 facility system

FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATORS

Southwestern Regional Centre
Blenheim
Paul Christensen
519-676-6001

Midwestern Regional Centre
Palmerston
George McArthur
519-343-2015

Oxford Regional Centre
Woodstock
Murray Hamilton
519-539-1251

Adult Occupational Centre
Edgar
Phil Morgan/Larry Shields (A)
705-728-6910

Huronia Regional Centre
Orillia
Jack Spencer/April, Mike Livesey/May*
705-326-7361 *position rotates monthly

Darcy Place
Cobourg
John Hewitt
905-372-5341

Prince Edward Heights
Picton
John Hewitt
613-476-2104

Rideau Regional Centre
Smiths Falls
Wynn Turner
613-284-0123

Northwestern Regional Centre
Thunder Bay*
contact Robert Rupnik
807-343-4324
* officially closed Mar 31, no residents remaining on site, most staff reassigned

Developmental Services

Director
Brian Law
325-5806

Executive Assistant
Vacant
327-4962

Program Support
Vacant
327-4953

Program Analyst
Barb Cooper
327-4961
• SAH, 3990s to ADAM, CAC/L, ONL/MCSS/Federal Gov's Project, Central Marketing, Services to Deaf-Blind, Dual Diagnostic, Nursing Home, Placement, Tr Ministry, Central area responsibility

Program Analyst
Bruce Head
325-5482
• Schedule 1 Facilities, Northern and Southeastern areas

Program Analyst
Rand Houghton
325-5478
• Social Contract, Social Assistance Reform, HR/PA/D&A, Supportive Housing, LTA, Bill 129, Sheltered Workshops/Day Programs, Adult Protective Services, Southwestern area responsibility

Program Analyst
Vacant

Support Staff:
Norma Romanelli
Secretary 327-4572
Sheila Thakker
Secretary 325-5456

Secretary
Louise Giff
327-4954

Policy Manager
Jordan Markham
327-4960

Policy Analyst
Joanna Bak
327-4967
• Alternatives to Sheltered Workshops and Segregated Settings (including over-21s), Special Services at Home Review, Individualized Funding

Policy Analyst
Doreen Hudic
327-4634
• Quality of Life Study

Policy Analyst
Doreen Henson
327-4686
• Transportation Review, DM/CAS

Policy Analyst
Gaela MacDonald-Tuttle
327-4623
• DS Accountability Project, Faradic Simulation

Policy Analyst
Darlene Yezer
327-4990
• Implementation/Policy, Impact of new Legislation, Advocacy, Consent to Treatment, Substitute Decisions

Policy Analysts
2 positions vacant

Support Staff:
Lucie Brisson
Secretary 325-4991
Sheila Thakker
Secretary 327-4992

PROVIDING SERVICES TO: AGENCIES, OTHER MINISTRIES,
CONSUMERS, AREA OFFICES

Social contract days reduced

The government and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union have agreed to reduce the number of social contract days that must be taken in the next two fiscal years.

The agreement allows for a total of 16.5 days from Apr. 1, 1993 to Mar. 31, 1996. This breaks down into 6.5 days in 1993-94, five days in 1994-95 and five days in 1995-96.

The scheduling and pay deduction of 8.5 days in 1993-1994 means that OPSEU staff will only have to take three days off in the 1994-95 fiscal year.

All OPSEU employees will be required to use the pro-rata form method of deduction (equal deductions from each paycheck) for the next two fiscal years.

ESR Straight Talk...

continued from page 1

and hires and exits.

The MCSS workforce analysis clearly indicates that the designated groups face employment barriers but the analysis does not tell why these barriers exist.

Through the second and third parts of the review the ESR Task Force will attempt to learn and understand how formal and informal barriers can have an adverse impact on the designated group members. Although the focus of this review is on the designated groups, we believe that all employees of the ministry will benefit from a workplace which promotes equal opportunity for employment, advancement and a fair and healthy work environment.

The ESR is an open, consultative and inclusive process. Your participation in the review is crucial and encouraged. With broad participation, the recommendations of the task force will reflect the understanding, wisdom, experiences, interests, needs and concerns of employees throughout the ministry.

Your comments, input and questions are appreciated by the MCSS Employment Systems Review and may be directed to Hunter Saggat, Project Manager, 56 Wellesley Street West, 17th floor, Toronto, M7A 1E9 (tel: 416-327-4933 or 327-4912; fax 327-0568; DEC account: ESR/PROJECT).

Employment accommodation: your questions answered

By Kaye Leslie, MCSS Employment Equity Office

During employment equity training sessions, our trainers receive many questions regarding employment accommodation and employees with disabilities. Often, there isn't sufficient time to address these questions during the sessions. Your Employment Equity Office will feature questions and answers in Dialogue.

Q: Is employment accommodation for persons with disabilities a legal right?

A: Yes, under the Ontario Human Rights Code, employers have a legal obligation to ensure equal treatment in employment by accommodating the individual needs of persons with disabilities. The new Employment Equity Act, the Collective Agreement and OPS policies support and further define the legal obligations to provide employment accommodation. The responsibilities of the manager, the

employee and the Employment Equity Office are outlined in Management Board Secretariat's "Human Resources Directives & Guidelines" document.

Q: Why do some people with disabilities not self-identify themselves as a person with a disability?

A: There are several reasons why an employee with a disability may not wish to self-identify — confidentiality, the misconception that they are unable to perform the duties of the job or the misconception that they would be a burden financially or perceived as needing or being given special treatment. Some often choose not to self-identify because their accommodation needs have not been met previously, and have not been viewed positively by fellow workers.

These could be some of the reasons, but one of the objectives of employment equity is to value all employees and allow them to

utilize their skills and talents in the workplace. Workplaces need to be — and perceived to be — welcoming so that individuals will feel safe in self-identifying, and will have their accommodation needs met in order to be fully productive and empowered members of the workforce.

MCSS provides the Quick Response Team as a resource to managers and employees to assist them in determining if employment accommodation needs exist and the options that are available to provide the accommodation.

Q: During times of economic constraint is it practical to ask a manager to consider spending money on accommodation for an employee if there is no budget to support this expense?

A: As already indicated, employers have a legal obligation to provide accommodation to those employees with disabilities who

require it. Constraints or lack of funds is not an issue in the OPS as Management Board Secretariat provides funding for employment accommodation for persons with disabilities. MCSS also has a technical aids fund which may supplement employment accommodation up to 50 per cent.

In order to apply for funds call the Employment Equity Office at (416) 327-4814 or e-mail Imelda Reyes.

Q: Who qualifies for employment accommodation?

A: Job applicants with disabilities and classified and unclassified employees with disabilities (full- and part-time), who require it must be accommodated.

If you have further questions, please call the Employment Equity Office at (416) 327-4816.

Doing business better: Best practices

Henny's helping colleagues be even better

By Julia Naczynski

Henny Berkelaar can claim a unique place in MCS.

She is the first person to work exclusively on developing customer service (CS) and better business practices (BBP) at the area-office level in the ministry.

"The two are intertwined, when you think about it," says Henny, who works at the Ottawa Area Office as CS/BBP project manager. "You develop better business practices that lead to better customer service, so it's hard to separate the two."

Most ministry locations have a better business practice (BBP) co-ordinator — most often it's a finance and administration staffer — but this role is usually an add-on to their other functions, notes Henny. "This is a really exciting opportunity."

The position was created through the ministry's Employment Equity Incentive Fund, which provides salaries for developmental opportunities for people who belong to the employment equity-designated groups. (Funding for the initial five-month project began in November and has since been extended.) Henny has disabilities due to diabetes.

Before taking on this project, Henny was an income maintenance officer, and prior to that worked in transfer payment agencies in Brockville.

So ... how do you improve customer service, anyway?

"The quick and easy answer is to hire more staff, but that's not going to happen in this time of constraints," says Henny. "The question should be: How can we do it

without putting money towards it?"

Based on the premise that people have good ideas about how to do their own jobs better if you only ask them, Henny has been vigorously encouraging staff within her project boundaries — the Ottawa Area Office and Ottawa Local Office at 10 Rideau Street, the sub-office on Laurier Avenue and the VRS office on Nicholas — to express their ideas. She set up a DEC account named CS/BBP to personally receive comments and suggestions (offering anonymity to those who request it), and encourages staff to leave messages on her voice-mail. An advisory committee of eight that represents the various sections and levels in the offices meets every two weeks to talk about implementing the suggestions.

Henny has also been studying the level of customer service by initiating a number of surveys. An internal staff survey of 30 staff members — chosen at random from among the 109 staffers at 10 Rideau — asked staff to rate the quality and timeliness of services provided to them internally. It also provided them with an opportunity to evaluate their own service delivery.

Telephone surveys are being conducted both at the main switchboard and on direct-dial lines. Customers are being asked if they are being served in a timely and courteous fashion, if they are able to contact the person they need and obtain

information and assistance in a direct manner — that is, without being bounced from person to person or voice mail to voice mail. A survey of walk-in customers ask similar questions about face-to-face contact.

Henny also wants to set up a half-day workshop on CS for staff.

"Sometimes people are afraid that better customer service means they'll be asked to do more," observes Henny. "But often it benefits you as an employee because it helps you to do your job more efficiently and save you time in the end."



Henny Berkelaar, centre, is developing better business practices and customer service at the Ottawa Area Office with advisory committee member Jenica Farmer and area manager Pierre Lalonde, among others.



Members of the team that developed our new allotment tracking system: standing, Paul Mariner, Dave Cope, Dan Lawlor, Doug Stephens, Liz Hyland, Josie Donato, Radhika McDoom, PC projects leader Patrick Vianna and manager Stephen Chan; front, Elizabeth Liness and Brenda Jessup.

A better way to track our money

By Julia Naczynski

Imagine trying to keep track of a \$9-billion budget.

Controlling and tracking one of the biggest ministry budgets in the Ontario government is a task that has recently gotten easier, thanks to the new Allotment Tracking System (ATS) developed in-house by a team of staff from Information Systems, Financial and Administrative Services and Financial and Capital Planning (FCP) branches, using existing software.

When money — in the form of approved spending limits — comes from Treasury Board, the ministry has to control and track its allotments and expenditures (how much we have to spend and what we've already spent).

The ministry was using what it called the Allotment Control System (or ACS), which consisted of massive Lotus spreadsheets.

But ACS was considered cumbersome and time-consuming to use, explains Brenda Jessup, a financial analyst with FCP. Reports had to be mailed and were hard to read, it took time to determine if allotments had been processed, you couldn't identify

who had made changes to data within the ACS, and there was no "print screen" function to save time and paper.

The ministry restructuring and specifically the closure of the regional offices also offered a reason to improve the system and make it more user-friendly. Restructuring meant a substantial increase in the volume of allotment organizational units dealt with by FCP Branch staff.

FASB analyzed the requirements of allotment system users, and provided significant Chart of Account changes, system design, user testing and development of reports and manuals for the project.

An internal team of staff worked to develop a system that was more user-friendly, especially to financial staff in the field. Members of the joint team included senior programmer analysts Paul Mariner and Elizabeth Liness, programmer analyst Douglas Stephens, systems officer Dan Lawlor and FCP co-ordinator Susan Conacher, all from Information Systems; from Financial and Administrative Services

Branch, FIS project leader Indu Gupta, systems officer Liz Hyland, FIS support officer Radhika McDoom, PC projects leader Patrick Vianna and manager Stephen Chan; from FCP, financial officers Armando Veneracion and Indira Hardat, Luisa Lampitoc and Josie Donato, financial analyst Brenda Jessup, and manager of estimates and allocations David Cope.

The group began work in the late fall of 1992 and by mid-March 1993 began user testing. The next month, ATS was born.

ATS streamlines the allotment processing functions. It generates reports faster, and offers convenient "screen inquiry" of on-line data to all ministry users — no need to wait for paper reports. Reports are transmitted electronically to the area offices (they are the biggest-volume users). Reports are easier to read and

information is easier to retrieve. Data is better controlled because changes are tracked by a user identification system for security. And there is a "print screen" feature.

There were no hardware costs involved because all sites already had personal computers and ready access through the All-in-1 system. Training sessions for area offices and facilities were held in December for financial staff to learn how to use the new system.

Both ACS and ATS have been maintained simultaneously for audit purposes, but ACS will be abandoned when the fiscal year ends. Then, it's on to new improvements. The next major step will be to provide access to ATS to area offices (target date: July).

Meeting our targets

Facts

As part of the province's Expenditure Control Plan announced in April 1993, our ministry set a savings target of \$313.7 million throughout its program areas for 1993-94. As of December 9, we achieved

about 71 per cent, or \$222.78 million, of that goal.

One area where we have been able to make significant savings is in administrative spending. When compared to the same period in 1992-93, the ministry reduced administrative spending in the Apr. 1993 - Feb. 1994 period as shown:

Consulting services:	Reduced by \$1,175 million
Ministry functions:	Reduced by \$157,243
Ministry travel:	Reduced by \$842,720
Information technology:	Reduced by \$780,862
Staff training & development:	Reduced by \$137,303
Vehicle Purchase/Replacement	Reduced by \$325,545

IYF events in April and May

Ontario's celebrations in recognition of International Year of the Family continue:

Apr. 23, annual conference of Toronto and District Parent Co-operative Preschool Corporation in Scarborough; Apr. 30, conference on the family, Ontario Home Economics Association, Ontario Family Studies/Home Economics Educators Association, Niagara Falls; month of May, artworks for children, Children's Aid Society/Ottawa City Council in Gloucester; May 2-6, family mall displays, Etobicoke Family Studies Teachers Association, Etobicoke; May 4-5, Ready to Learn conference, Christian Children's Fund of

Canada, Scarborough; May 6, spring workshop, Ontario Family Studies/Home Economics Educators Association, Ottawa; May 11-14, second Carleton Conference on the History of the Family, Ottawa; May 14, open house, Toronto East General Hospital, Toronto; May 14, Spring Festival block party, Guelph Spring Festival, Guelph; May 14, Kids Talk Fair, Peterborough Public Health Unit/Peterborough Public Library; May 16-20, IYF Week, Bank of Montreal, throughout Ontario.

For more information and the names of contact people for these events, call Irv Kirstein of the MCSS Communications and Marketing Branch, 416-325-5168 or e-mail KIRSTEIN.I

French language services explained

By Lisa Ker, French Language Services

Have you ever wondered about how to get a letter translated? Or why certain area offices are designated to offer service in French and English, and others aren't? Or perhaps you simply want information on the French Language Services Act, and why we have one... Well, simply turn to the MCSS Guide to the implementation and maintenance of services in French (or *Guide pour la mise en oeuvre et le maintien des services en français*).

This guide was created for use in area offices, local offices and even in community-based organizations involved in the delivery of ministry services to the public.

Based upon a request from Operations Management Committee, it was known in 1991, French language services (FLS) co-ordinators in the area offices and at Corporate prepared the guide, using their own and their colleagues' responsibilities and needs as a starting point. This led to the creation of a vision statement which reads: "The ministry envisions the evolution of a social service system in Ontario that ensures, where appropriate and possible, that Francophone citizens and their communities have full access to and full participation in the delivery of services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate."

Using this statement, they put together a tool which can be used to answer questions and provide direction to staff in the ministry

working with Francophone clients, organizations and communities.

The guide provides the ministry with an outline of the roles and responsibilities in providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services. It details the policies and best practices which serve to integrate FLS into the way we do business.

In 1993, Senior Management Committee approved the guide in its final draft and it is ready for distribution, in both English and French. The guide is to be made available on DEC in April, for consultation by all ministry staff who have access to the system. It will be printed and distributed later this spring.

You will find the information contained in the guide divided into four sections: Planning principles and vision statement; the French Language Services Act; MCSS Directly Operated Programs and Services; and Transfer Payment Agencies.

These sections cover topics ranging from communications to designated positions. As well, users will find four appendices which provide background and a context to the content of the guide, and a copy of the newly-approved Translation Request Form.

Nous souhaitons que ce guide puisse servir à tous ceux et celles qui travaillent avec les communautés francophones de la province, et les appuyer dans la réalisation de notre vision des services en français au ministère. BONNE LECTURE!!!

People on the move

Kevin Costante has been confirmed as Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities, a position in which he had been acting ADM for several months.

Doreen Seddon has retired after almost 37 years with the OPS, nearly 30 of them with the ministry. She retired as policy and program analyst with the Social Assistance Reform Project/JobLink.

Betty Badour has retired after a long and rewarding career in the field of income maintenance. She retired from her position as manager of the Eligibility Review Unit in Toronto.

Colleagues in Sudbury bid farewell to Richard Rivard, who retires from the ministry after more than 31 years. Richard was Sudbury Area Manager from 1979 until his retirement at the end of February. During his career, Richard had been

Cynthia Lees, previously the North Central Co-ordinator and Regional Co-ordinator for Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC).

David Zuccato, District Manager in the Sault Ste. Marie Office, became Acting Area Manager in the North Bay Area Office (the North East Area) as of Apr. 1 for a six-month period. Besides his role as the district manager, Dave until recently chaired the Employment Steering Committee and currently has the divisional lead for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services better business practices review.



Dave Zuccato



Don Lofrenier

regional welfare administrator in Sault Ste. Marie and Kirkland Lake, as well as the district director in Timmins and Sudbury.

A number of changes have taken place in the Sudbury Area Office.

Dan Lafrenier, who was the Sudbury District Manager, will be the Acting Sudbury Area Manager (North Central Area) until late September. Taking his place in Sudbury District Office will be



Richard Rivard, now retired himself, on the occasion of the retirement of two long-time employees in Sudbury: Dennis Ockenden (centre) and Martin Streich, who both retired Dec. 31, both with 31 years of service to the ministry.

Payroll moves

The ministry's Payroll Unit has transferred to Human Resources Branch from Financial and Administrative Services Branch (FASB). Staff also make a physical move to 2 Bloor St. W. from 880 Bay St.

Purchasing Unit staff will relocate to 880 Bay in order to consolidate all FASB activities at one site.

This change is being made to improve customer service and to minimize confusion

around the roles and responsibilities of the two branches.

Note that verification and reconciliation functions, which have been part of Central Payroll, will remain within FASB.

Doug Carrington will continue in his role as CORPAY co-ordinator within Human Resources for the next six months.

Details about relocations, changes in addresses and telephone numbers will be announced as they occur.

Where are they now?

Some Hepburn Block units have moved around, so you may want to note the changes in floor locations in your telephone or address book.

Developmental Services Branch was relocated from the 4th floor to the 7th; the Employment Unit is temporarily re-located from the 4th floor to the south end of the 3rd floor; Community Services Branch is still on the 4th floor but in different offices; the Social Assistance Programs Branch is still on the 3rd floor but a new location; and Children's Services Branch has been re-located from the 3rd floor to the North end

of the 4th floor.

These changes are not in the newly-published Spring/Summer 1994 Telephone Directory; phone numbers stay the same, though.

Watch for more changes that are scheduled to take place in April — Management Support Branch and Financial and Capital Planning are moving soon, say the Facilities Management Group, who oversee these moves. The group thanks staff for their co-operation and the project team for their hard work.

dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

Dialogue is published 10 times a year by the Communications and Marketing Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to provide an information forum for all members of the ministry. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect ministry or government policy.

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